



plant. The physical movement, brisk but not frantic, reminds one of the hustle seen in an election headquarters.

"Every new employee begins with two to seven weeks of classroom instruction about the company," I was told by my Japanese host as I followed him through one of the assembly plants. "They learn its history, rules, goals, and an outline of relations between labor and management."

"Classroom instruction in a variety of jobs is followed by work on the assembly line—by everyone—to better understand car construction."

Suggestions are one way for an employee to gain attention, and in Japanese companies they appear in a steady deluge. It is not unusual for a plant to receive an average of one suggestion per employee per week, totaling tens of thousands a year. In Toyota headquarters I asked to see the results of such brainstorming. A giggling secretary brought a handful of pencils sharpened at both ends, and a serious-faced spokesman explained: "A clerk suggested that we glue or staple two short ones together back to back to extend their use."

The extended life of pencils is only a tiny

30 percent of new-car sales by early 1983.

"In a sense, everybody was right and everybody was wrong," said Professor Robert Cole, former director of Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan. "When Americans wanted large cars and only Americans made them, it made perfect sense for unions to ask for higher wages and management to grant them. The truth became apparent through hindsight, but really after the '73 oil shock everybody should have seen the handwriting on the wall."

Americans had access to small cars many times. Les Lindvig of Phoenix, Arizona, led me through a collection rejected by most U. S. buyers: the Henry J, the Nash Metropolitan and Rambler, and the Crosley Hot-shot, a snappy pint-size sports car that got 40 miles per gallon in the late 1940s.

We paused by a roadster introduced in 1930 that was smaller than the Volkswagen Beetle—the American Austin.

"It was heralded as the practical car of the

future, but cartoonists made it the butt of jokes," Lindvig said. He picked up an auto history book: "Look, here's one showing an Austin stuck to a wad of chewing gum. We were a big country with lots of open space. Americans went for big cars."

When the fuel squeeze helped change drivers' minds, the small cars were being built elsewhere. Twenty-two percent of U. S. sales are now Japanese cars, which are both well built and inexpensive. I went to Japan to find out how they do it.

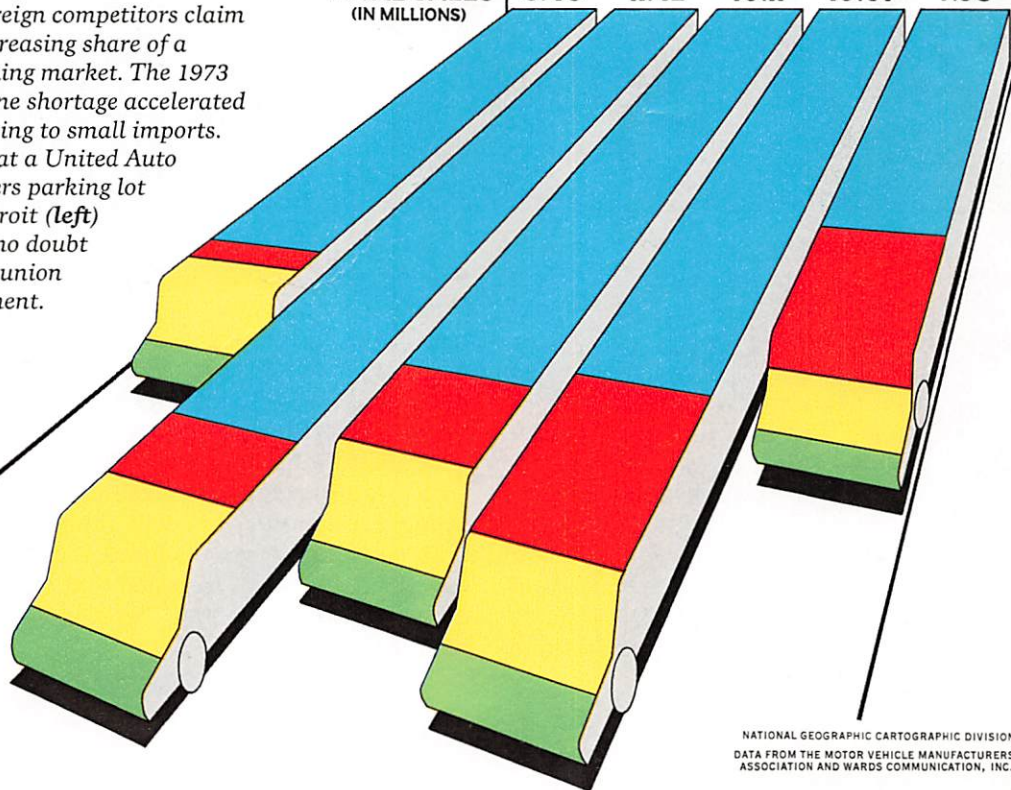
AMERICANS HAVE long believed that they invented the "fast pace of living." I had to stretch my legs to keep up with the small, wiry 27-year-old striding briskly through a Tokyo rail station as we headed for a bullet train that would shoot us closer to Toyota headquarters.

The pace of the line workers equaled that of my guide. Nobody strolls in a Japanese

Imports drive into U.S. market

CAUGHT in a double bind, U. S. automakers see foreign competitors claim an increasing share of a shrinking market. The 1973 gasoline shortage accelerated the swing to small imports. Signs at a United Auto Workers parking lot in Detroit (left) leave no doubt about union sentiment.

	1970	1973	1976	1979	1982
DOMESTIC	84.8%	84.7%	85.2%	78.1%	72.2%
JAPANESE	3.7%	6.5%	9.3%	16.6%	22.6%
GERMAN	8.9%	6.9%	3.7%	3.3%	3.1%
OTHER	2.6%	1.9%	1.8%	2.0%	2.1%
TOTAL SALES (IN MILLIONS)	8.40	11.42	10.11	10.67	7.98



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CARTOGRAPHIC DIVISION
DATA FROM THE MOTOR VEHICLE MANUFACTURERS
ASSOCIATION AND WARDS COMMUNICATION, INC.



Period piece on wheels, an 1898 Benz Velo gets red-carpet treatment (**above**) in the California home of a classic-car collector, who counts 17 vintage autos in his collection.

Like-minded enthusiasts tool along in a 1900 English Mechanic (**left**) during the annual London to Brighton Run. The rally commemorates the abolishment in 1896 of a law requiring that a pedestrian waving a red flag precede each motor vehicle by 60 yards to warn of its approach.

*National Geogra 15
July 1983*

or no cost help woo workers into a lifetime marriage with corporations. The cost of these benefits is borne by the Japanese firms. And some benefits have less to do with money than humanity.

"We have art clubs, basketball clubs, singing groups—something for every interest," said my host at Toyota, Yasuo Sasaki. Plus no firings—"except for just cause"—and no long strikes in more than 30 years.

In Japan's corporate unions, each auto company deals only with labor representatives elected from that company's ranks.


"Management doesn't mind divulging plans and finances to the union when they

and stand behind them," the 82-year-old consultant remembered in the basement office of his home in Washington, D. C. "I told them they could develop worldwide markets and be prosperous. They didn't believe me at first, but they went to work improving the production line and quality."

The Japanese exceeded their own expectations, and the teacher became a near deity in their eyes, the Moses who led them out of economic wilderness. The visage on the medal turned to me with fire in his eyes when I asked if American businesses were on the right path to industrial resurgence.

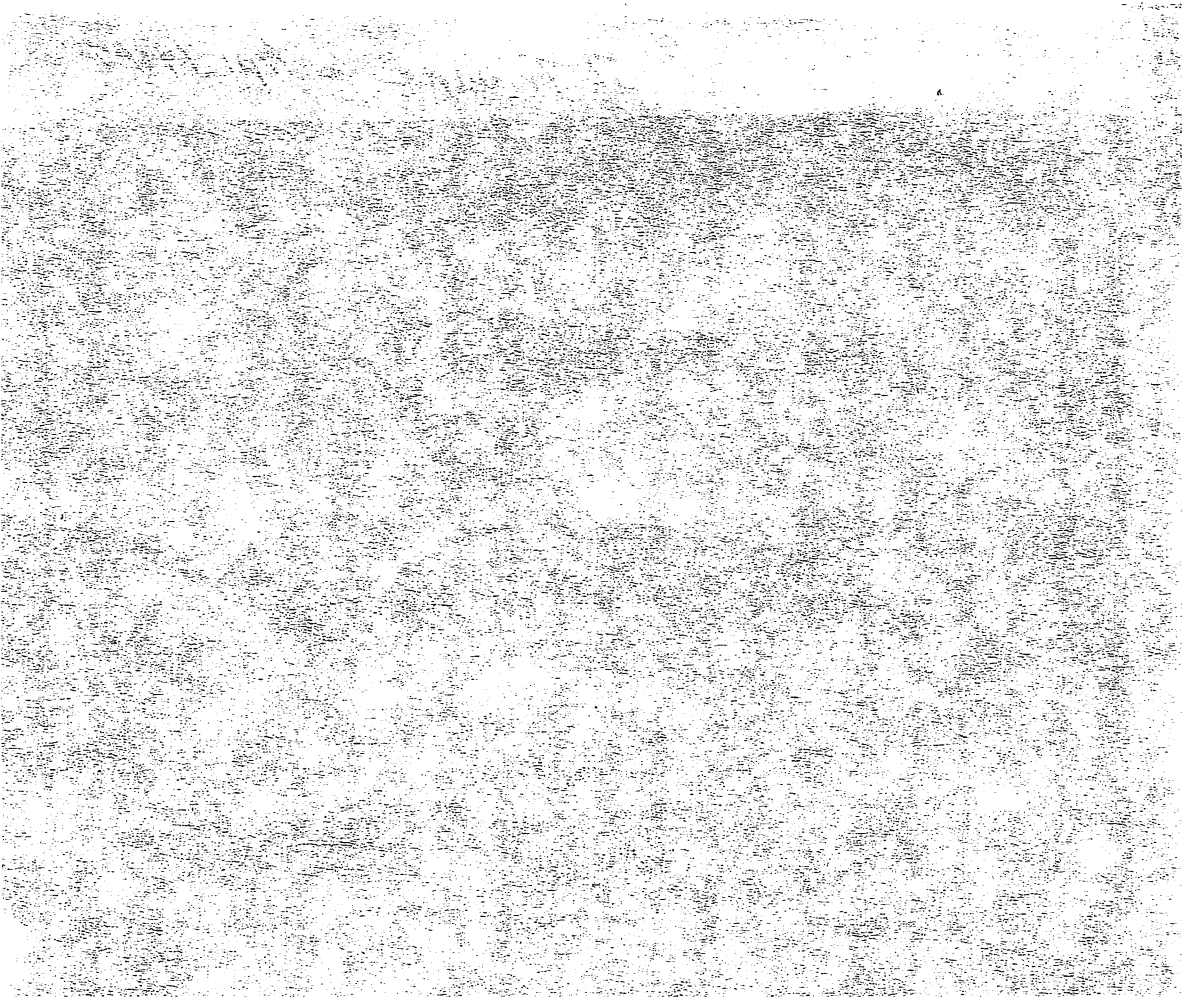
"Does it look as if they are?" he barked.

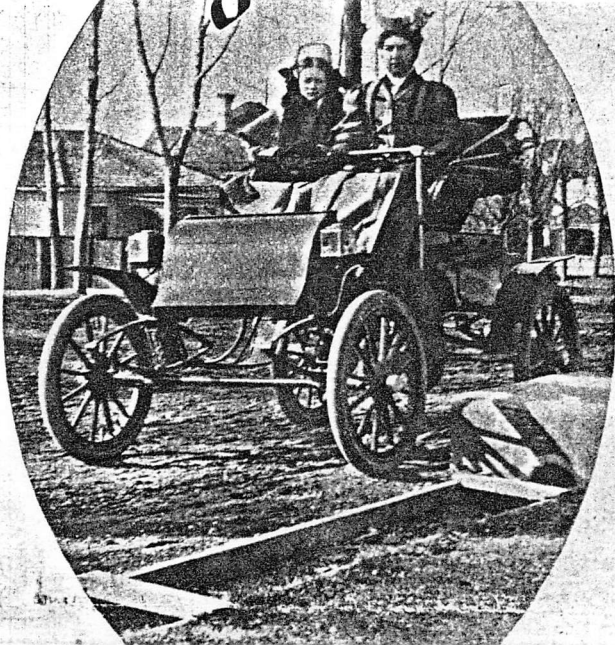
SL Tribune 6 Apr 1947

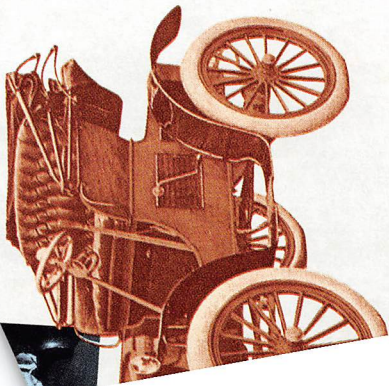


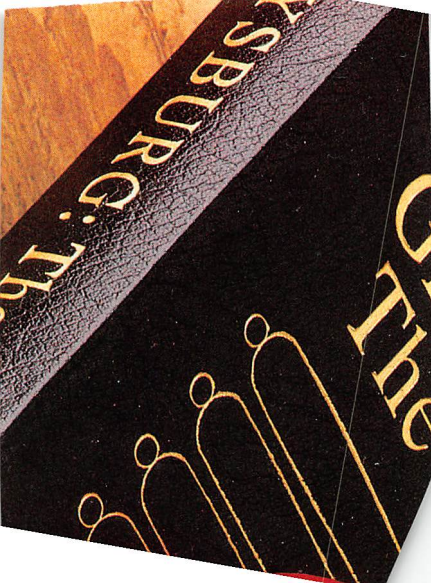
Wagon wheels and driving stick characterized early model at left. Then, as now, when the car stopped, the only answer was to get out and get under.

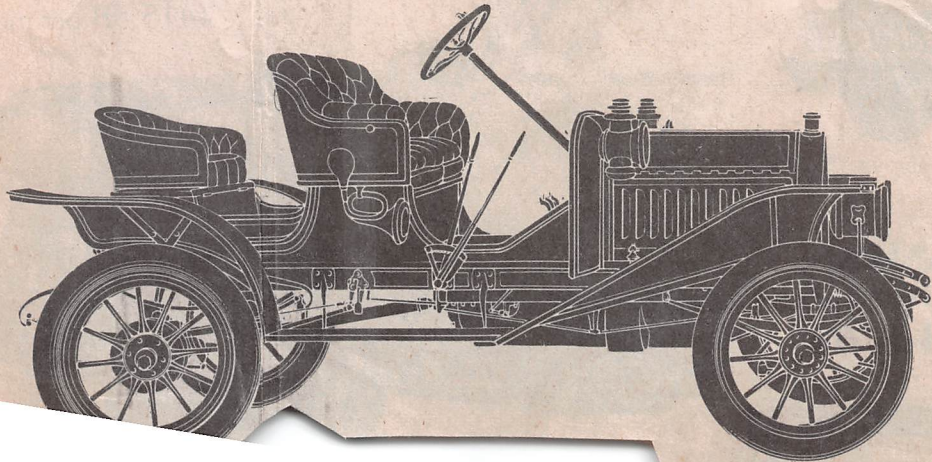
"Get a Horse













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